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READER ALERT!

ANTI HERO

HOLY SHIT!

DO NOT BEGIN READING THIS ISSUE WITHOUT A CLEAR EXIT STRATEGY!

Tales From a Weird & Righteous Life

TH INK

WAKE THE SHEEPLE

UNSEEN

"I JUST LIKE TO TRICK MY FRIENDS INTO REMAINING A NOWHERE LOSER LIKE MYSELF. IT KEEPS THEM AROUND.

JUST SIT AROUND AND MOPE, I GUESS.

People rarely get injured while moping.

And you can mope in all kinds of weather.

Maybe I'd even find a moping partner, to keep me motivated.

Lets call this PRE-PAGE ONE because after reading over the following sixteen pages I concluded that some context should be added first as well as some generalized info in order to help you,dear reader,to better understand what you're about to embark upon as you read this.

Yes,I've procrastinated now upwards of T-W-O years in getting this started and believe me...T-H-I-S was absolutly not what I had in mind as far as writing a zine,oh no,very very very very far from it. Time washed away and the ideas and concepts got stored away until my current cellmate and I hooked up as cellies and it was this spectacular dude that provided the "spark". I had introduced him to zines a long time ago, his name is Tim Smith..AKA "ORBIT". I shared the following story with him and he remarked I should write a book.The few others who heard my story also made comments like that in the past.I had written this as a means of therapy I guess,to put it out,purge myself if you will. So Orbit motivated me to write and so this was born from those discussions.

Now...adding context is necessary because I am a bit older than most D.I.Y zinesters,in fact,I possibly could be your old man(OUCH!!!!).I'm 42 years old so understand this story was born in 1963.The story you are going to read starts approx in 1967/early 1968>>> a VERY different time in america. Life was dramatically different.

I lived in Temple,Pa which is about 4-5 miles outside of Reading Pa,a suburb of Reading.Middle class.Knowing this will help you as you read because reading it in todays context would make it quite strange to understand.

Also..Reading Pa use to be the "Pretzel Capital of the world"...No shit,so the soft pretzel weirdness is true alright.You'll see.

You see,I have handwritten my "life story" up to the point I was 17 and then in the ultimate act of rebellion joined the Army.upcoming editions will bring you to that point and into my army years.How the government made a totally fucked up unit like I'd become and trained him to undertake Reagan's/America's "dirty undeclared wars" in the 80's.Its fucken outragious now as I look back and the story needs to be told.

I became a late blooming radical/revolutionary...whatever...which is why I sat here at 42 doing a zine.It seemed the outlet for this.There will be difficult things you'll read yet the truth is often difficult.I hold nothing back dear reader,you get it in the raw.

I hate labels as you'll see,they restrict us.I am many things.Basically I boil it down to being a "FREAK".

I'm far from the average 42 year old alright so blank that shit out.I have an ex-wife and 6 kids..yep..6 kids.I want to give them recognition for being amazing and having made my life something worth living or I imagine I'd have checked out long ago,most likely in a jungle down in central or south america or some other hole in the world doing america's dirty business.

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NO REALLY..I MEAN IT..LAST PAGE

Point being,lessons were learned as I did this alright and so I'll make it a point to master the "set margin" aspect and I promise future issues will be easier to read.I told you I suck at "layout" so have patience with this virgin zinester.

Oh...you may ask "why didnt anyone report...."><<<<this was from 1967/68 until 1973 what you just read. The golden era when basically kids were allowed to be horrifically abused and it was nobodies damn business like it is today so that says a lot doesnt it??? The next few..couple..issues will move from late 1973 to just before 1980..the attitude toward abuse etc continued in those years also BTW.

You will notice the insides of the front and back covers are blank.I have not decided what to do there so I just left it blank,I figured why clutter this up(laughing).Look...D-O-N-T be all fantastically serious reading this,sure..its some fucked up shit and all but theres M-O-R-E to it so lighten up,its cool to laugh about some of the shit.I do so...but hey,I'm a bit warped,maybe you are to.Out of this mess called life I developed a twisted sense of humor,for example...a horrible earthquake strikes say Iran or someplace.I watch the death toll numbers go up and derive some sick delight in seeing that number go higher.Or...I realize its sad and all but theres something in me that when I see a person in a wheelchair in a mall who cant help it but they're drooling and spazzing and all..you know what I mean...christ,I run cause I want to laugh alright.Yes yes yes dear reader,I am painfully aware this is sick and fucked up but I also think deep down inside A-L-L of us is that twisted part but we just dont share it.I'm sharing it alright.Now if the earthquake hit California..I love how A-R-N-O-L-D says it dont you???...now I dont have that sick glee like the earthquake in say..Iran or someplace.So I'm not a consistent warp head.

Maybe I should NOT have revealed that stuff,I know you're all thinking "what a sick fuck" now but please dont alright.We A-L-L come with baggage and "issues",mine are harmless,I'm not hurting people and doing twisted shit,I've always kept my demons to myself.Well...exception being during my army years but I promise you'll see when we get there.

Who is the soldier on the back cover??? Me in my capacity as a "military advisor" in El Salvador circa 1984.I almost got that out with a straight face,wow!!

Okay,I got faulty Ritalin today obviously..sorry!!

Why do we drive on parkways and park on driveways??? Remember the FX channel show last year called "Starved"??? Am I the only one who pissed in their pants laugning??? That was a great show.

Well dear reader,I leave you now.Oh...seriously now...who do you visualize as Darth Vader more>>>Dick Cheney or Donald Rumsfeld??? Seriously!!! Spooky isnt it???

Thanks for reading my zine,more issues will be coming soon.

THE LAST PAGE

I was not going to add on like this yet this somehow continues to haunt me,I mean clearly dear reader,I suck at the whole "layout" part of doing this dont I??? Its okay,I know I do so its cool to think that privatly.So...its with the whole "I suck at this layout stuff" that seems to have forced my fingers back to work hoping to clear it up a bit.

You should know that where I grew up..Temple..isnt anymore than a "borough" alright,we're talking a 99% residential area clustered neatly into roughly a 12 block by 10 block "chunk" of area alright so its N-O-T big by any definition.You..dear reader..may be wondering this due to my wondering around as a young boy,thinking that "Temple" is some reguler size "town" or something,its N-O-T alright. In fact,this whole suberb area of Reading Pa is broken into a number of these "borough" type area's..all essentially connected yet very distinct if you can understand.Ther's Temple,Hyde Park,Laureldale,Riverview Park,Cherokee Ranch and look out..in the 80's a new "borough" was added...hold your breath..North Temple. When you do a census of these boroughs you M-A-Y scrape up say 8 to 10 thousand alright and thats adding A-L-L of the boroughs together.I believe this will help you get a better feel,a better context with which to place my growing up and the stories that will spring forth in upcoming editions.Hell..I may even attempt to draw some sort of map to provide you with an even better understanding of the wheres and all that this all took place in.I probably should have done the whole "map" idea in this issue but...well...sorry.Drawing maps is kind of art related and lets face it,I draw stick people alright so I need help on that.I feel its good to know ones limitations and try not to cross those boundries too often.Usually trouble lurks there if you do.

Now...I do again want to S-C-R-E-A-M at you dear reader to N-O-T do this whole weepy I feel soooo sorry for him kind of crap.THATS NOT THE REASON I DID THIS.Nor do I blame events in my childhood for why I am here in jail.I'm here because I broke the law,its completly unrelated to anything associated with my growing up.

This zine will have really terrible shit,personal shit,political shit,hilarious stories mixed in....ALL kinds of stuff.

Next issue will dive into my teen years which became a massive rollercoaster ride of fantastic abuse,monumentally fun times,amazing stories about some people,its going to be some wild reading for you dear reader,then we'll drift into the army years and beyond that I dont know as I sit here,I figure thats a lot of issues and being A.D.H.D. its best N-O-T to lose attention.

Two Theres going to be some gallactically graphic shit in the next issue or ,theres really no way to soften or cushion it for you so I wont try,you've been warned but I encourage you to read on and view it all from above,soak it in,see the complexities of this life being born and lets both see where this takes us.

Well,I want to apologize also,this zine does not have the drawings etc in the background and words done in cut & paste etc like most,budget issues abound.This is done with an old typwriter and carbon paper.Future issues will have staples down the side like a reguler zine instead of the corner like this issue.

THE OTHER SIDE

Lets see..My oldest son is Rich,he'27 now.Nobody believes it but I bought him from a junkie who was on her death bed with A.I.D.S. back in 1982.He's from Yakima,Washington.Next is my daughter Nina who is now 21.She was born in Panama City,Panama where she still lives.(I was based at Fort Clayton in Panama City through most of the 80"s).Next is from my ex-wife...Daughter Tawny who has j-u-s-t turned 20.She is a sophmore studying Kinsieology down at U.of Tx in Denton.Next is daughter Casey who is 16.She lives in Ridgefield Ct with my oldest son Rich and will be a senior in high school.Next is daughter Brianna who is 14 going on 15.Lets say I had moments of dis-loyalty in my marriage.Brianna was born in Lake Charles Louisiana and lives in Westlake La now with her mom who I knew from travels in and out of Fort Polk in Leesville La and last but not least is my youngest,my son T.J. who is 13 and also lives up in Ridgefield Ct with Casey and my oldest son Rich. Rich lost his wife Sept 11th in New York.He is engaged to be married now.My daughter Tawny recently gave birth to a son,my grandson..Brendon. Thats my family and we are A-L-L amazingly close,the kids all know each other and spend time with each other although its difficult for Nina since she lives in Panama.

My father died suddenly on Fathers Day weekend in 1997 robbing me..I'd always secrety hoped he would have some horrible disease making him suffer in agony and pain,drawn out over say 20 years before he died but he dropped dead of a heart attack...you'll see where those harsh feelings come from when you read this.My mom passed away in her sleep March 27,2000 having died from complications from emphasema.

My brother Mike is married with a son and lives in Bound Brook Nj.My older sisters live in Ct and Nj. My father gave me a brother and a sister in the early 80's but I have no idea where they are.

So look,I'd love to hear from anyone who would be moved to write.I'd like to say a donation is appreciated for the zine,like a couple bucks to cover the paper,carbon paper and postage but fuck it if you cant because all you can do is send a money order...no cash.Its why I struggle getting zines from others,I cant send out cash either which sucks.

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My fellow "Freak" orbit is putting out a zine too.."Transmissions from Orbit"...same deal as me,a donation or whatever,its good stuff,I mean come on..the dudes name is "Orbit" so...
Contact him at the same address as me: Tim Smith FS-4902

Thats it people,hope you get something from my zine.Let me know.
LATER.....

PAGE ONE

I've procrastinated L-O-N-G enough about doing this and I do absolutly mean way toooooo long!! I've started this probably 50 times only to lose my motivation....the actual "do it" aspect. Mainly the ailment has been this part right here....the "How should I start" part as well as the "What am I going to say" part.

So I've pathetically allowed myself the "out" as far as actually doing this.I'd like to say that what has truely motivated me is generally the writings of Janice Flux who through her zine "Cutlass" has so daringly and honestly revealed herself as large parts of her life story for us all to read.That takes courage to reveal all those deep inner held secrets and thoughts and our story of life...the totality of which has formed the "who" we have become.She is fantastic and for the 7 or 8 people who may not know of "Cutlass" I do highly suggest you find it.

Thats where this zine will start....the brutally honest and yes...warped story that became my life yet you'll see I somehow survived the insanity of it. NO!!!!! This is N-O-T one of those typical prisoner zines of bitching about "The system","The pigs","The corruption of the prison and justice systems" etc etc.....We all are aware of that.Instead,I'd like to share with you the story of a life,a interesting story and one that will in many places be perhaps uncomfortable to get through but I invite you in.

I will tell this absolutly N-O-T to elicit bullshit sympathy or anything like that so damnit do N-O-T feel sorry or any of that sappy shit! Lets call this a really insane story which happens to be completly true. This story has formed "Who" I've become,I survived in spite of this journey through life and I think you may enjoy reading about it. It's written honestly yet in many places rather graphically so buckle up...you've been warned.

There are those who may say "Whats this old bastard doing writing a zine" and thats cool,physical age is only a label and this old bastard is a L-O-T of labels.Labels are societies way of neatly defining who and what a person is which is a load of shit,nobody is a (insert label)...people who are interesting and have lead real lives are a blend of "labels" so since most of you naturally attach these labels,usually mentally,to describe a person I thought I'd save you some time on that.....

LABELS:I am...a son,father,ex-husband,male,queer,fag,Bi,str8,breeder,pervert,freak,conservative,liberal,socialist,communist,progressive,noe-con,republican,democrat,independant,green,mao-ist,buddhist,jew,heeb,kike,Irish,mick,revolutionary,radical,anarchist,establishment,anti-establishment,rebel,punk,rocker,hillbilly,disco queen,new waver,head,druggie,tripper,junkie,dealer,bastard,prick,asshole,military veteran,peace activist,war mongerer,military advisor,operator,state sponsored murderer and killer,recon/tactical ops specialist,warrior,sergeant first class U.S.Army,nation builder,humanitarian,covert mission specialist,hippy,comedian,prankster,convict,inmate.....but you say "How the hell can one person be all T-H-A-T",well...I could probably add many more so the point is don't label people...move beyond that shit alright!

For those who may suspect falsity in the story I'll be sharing I will simply refer you to the movie "A few good men" and the courtroom scene where Jack Nicholson declares "You can't handle the truth"....It's kind of a motto I adopt in my life.....

PAGE SIXTEEN

A mortuary calm descended on the house over the next week,an episode of the Twilight Zone AND The Outter Limits was playing out in reality. The first few nights I stayed with my brother in his bedroom,bursts of fear overwhelming me at the slightest sound,fearing his return.Surely he was coming back.....

But he didnt.I moved back to my bedroom.My brother bringing in blankets and pillows and we worked on making my cave into something one could call a bedroom.He stayed with me my first few nights in my room until the wiring in my nervous system ceased its overload and I was finally allowed to sleep the sleep of the dead,true sleep,a luxery I had stopped remembering. My brother didnt ever speak of my dad around me again,he simply ceased.Although he continued to pick on me it was brother on brother "picking on" and horseplay,things we had NEVER before done,I had a brother all of a sudden.Neither of us went to school that whole week,mom didnt say a word about it,we were all in this odd state of mourning it seemed...adjusting maybe.It was needed.As though Avi somehow sensed it,he didnt come around wondering where I was.These were very strange days.

My mom eased into becoming in many ways like Avi's,mostly neglectful and more or less ignoring me (and my brother) although there were no harsh words spoken,new clothes suddenly began to appear for me,food became available and she occasionally seemed engaged now and then in my life.Our lives changed,like recovering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

This childhood part or phase of my life ended abruptly a week before christmas. Avi was killed.The papers said he had been hit by a Conrail freight train up on the bridge behind the playground...the bridge we knew like the back of our hands.We could blindfold each other and spin around and be absolutly safe from those trains..we knew it instinctually.

So they said it was an "accident" yet in my heart I've A-L-W-A-Y-S harbored the nagging belief that he just surrendered to life.I dont know if I'll E-V-E-R get over the loss!!! Inside I desperatly want to believe he is in a better place now...free at last.

THANK YOU AVI COHAN

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I heard it before I even got outside the house,from down the block his voice could be heard.Instant fear filled me as I walked the dreaded ½ block up to our house.

I slithered in the side door and realized total war had begun inside my house.A trail of debris...books,a lamp,up-ended furniture....lead out to the kitchen where the epicenter was now located.My father and mother screaming at each other,dishes smashing,glass breaking.This struck fear into my heart the likes I'd N-E-V-E-R felt before.I bolted upstairs past my brother who was poised near the top of the steps listening.As I darted by he announced it had been going on for the past couple hours non-stop.He was English soccer fan excited by this furious war between our parents,you could even say he was giddy.I ran and hid in my closet knowing beyond any doubt this typhoon downstairs would be spinning up to visit me,there was no way I'd be avoiding a fantastically painful night.I pre-disconnected myself going numb in advance and sat shaking in fear in the dark of the closet.

I have no idea when it filtered through to me,entering my disconnected state,but I slid back to reality hearing Dinah Washington. It had ended,when I couldnt have told anyone but the war had ended and Dinah was signalling dad had left and mom was either hammered or getting hammered on vodka.

I carefully opened the closet door,peeking out into my bedroom,anticipating his paw snatching me and ripping me out of the closet...B-U-T...only Dinah singing downstairs.I peeked out of my bedroom and there sat my brother at the top of the steps with his back facing me.He turned and waved me over to him. He had been savagly beaten by my father,the first time he ever felt the wrath and I didnt want to imagine what that was like,my brother was FUCKED UP BAD!

We sat on the top step holding each other,some tears slipping down our cheeks,both afraid to do what HAD to be done.....going down to see. Soon mom's crying elevated itself above Dinah's singing,she was at least alive.

After what seemed gallactically long I eased down the steps.Furniture overturned,books strewn,pictures ripped off walls and smashed and I had not even gotten to the kitchen.I stepped into the living room and stood in sheer horror. My mom had gotten used as a punching bag also...another first.It shocked and scared me. She suddenly looked up at me and said in a graveled voice "Your father has left" and that was that.It was N-E-V-E-R discussed or mentioned again and would be a little over 3 years before I saw or heard from him again.

I cleaned up the living room as I noticed somehow over the years I had unconciously memorized some of Dinah Washington. You know when you hear a song inside your head you sing along??? There I was cleaning up and in my head I caught myself singing...to Dinah..my symbol of misery and despair and it hit me like a brick.I understood WHY mom listened to her.Most of you probably NEVER heard of her,she was a singer in the late 40's and 50's singing a style of music called "Torch songs". And there I was,singing it in my head,pouring out Dinah's heartfelt words.It stunned me.

My father had destroyed the entire kitchen,every glass,bowl,plate and drawer smashed and dumped and thrown around,it took H-O-U-R-S to clean up.It was close to dawn when I made it up to my room.

I wish to apologize for my typewriters strange printing where it decides on itself to break apart words etc,all I can say is read carefully and you'll get past that annoying glitch.

Peoples lives are a result of many things,the "who" they are and become is greatly influenced by parents,economic status,type of upbringing,environmental,education and many other factors all mold together to create this "WHO" we are so to begin this edition we need to go W-A-Y back in time...I am 42 after all...and where we'll start is my insane childhood years,the "formative years" as they call it.BTW:Who the hell are "THEY" anyway??? I've constantly been baffled by that all my life.I suspect theres a secret room located someplace where "THEY" meet to determine all those things that "they say"...but anyway.

Remember...this is not pretty and will be delivered unvarnished,in a perverse way..enjoy the story>>>

This "who" we are is generally developed out of the more significant events in our lives,I consider my entire childhood to be a "significant event" so I can't isolate my earlier childhood into isolated events as the day to day,sometimes hour to hour struggle growing up form a base from where my life sprang.

I come from a rather well-to-do family,my father was a well known,highly respected and "connected" attorney in Reading,Pa.A local big-wig in democratic politics.He was also an alcholic who abused me specifically yet the rest of the family suffered as well.He was a hard drinker,gambler and womanizer.I have to write this in the totality of events covering age 4 to 10 as I can't really do a laundry list of singular events to charactorize my growing up.This was survival.

The earliest memories are from age 4 which was knowing what the odor of scotch on my father meant.NOT knowing it was scotch,but what that odor meant for me.I was in trouble and probably end up being physically assaulted,not beaten,no,but truely assaulted by the animal.

I remember being attacked to the point of being beaten unconcious and then waking up in complete agony,often times locked inside my bedroom closet.Maybe in the morning I'd be allowed out,maybe not,time ceases locked in a dark closet.All I ever knew was that I had been a "bad boy" but never once knew what it was that made me this "bad boy". My mother was a silent partner in this as no attempt was ever made to stop it so as a general feeling I mostly felt misery.

My older brother was treated the exact opposite of me and would pick on me and make fun of me and my condition which for me was worse than the assaults themselves.

My living condition was barren.My bedroom consisted of a mattress on the floor with a sheet...no blanket or pillow,a lamp on the floor and old milk crates to put my clothes in.

My clothing consisted of hand me downs from my brother,only rarely was new clothing purchased although I do remember one time getting a pair of new sneakers.Love was a game my parents played with me.I didnt truely know how to feel about this,it simply was my "normal".

PAGE THREE

I could only conclude that I was in fact a "bad boy" and did in fact deserve my treatment.I learned early on that food was some luxery I had to somehow earn or "perform" for meaning if I did my chores right I'd be allowed to have some leftovers from the family meal.I didnt sit at the table with everyone,mostly I served my family and cleaned up afterwords.If I had earned the leftovers I would sit in the back corner of the kitchen on the floor and ate sort of like an animal...with my hands and learned to feel special if given a glass of milk.You see,my father had beaten me into a state of total,complete submission by age 5 and I began to learn the powerful feeling of "WANTING".

School began and I found my true escape! School was where I found out just how utterly different my life was so I quickly learned to make up a life to talk about in order to fit in as best as I could although I quickly also figured out I was one of "those" kids in school,you know the one I mean...the strange one,weird one,different one.

My kindergarten teacher was Mrs.Knutson who was a wonderful,loving old woman.It didn't take her long to figure out something was wrong and was not right with me.I never had my .10 cents milk money and to get me awake from our afternoon nap was a monumental effort.School equeled safety to me and it allowed me to honestly sleep.

She never asked me anything but would quietly call me up to her desk and give me a milk and assure me that it "was okay",never once drawing un-needed attention.

BTW:I am A.D.H.D. as well as having R.A.D....Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Reactive Adjustment Disorder.My current cellmate also dug up my ass about getting my shit together and get started on this zine.He is also working on his own..I'm to mention this:Transmissions from Orbit...My cellmate is Orbit...anyway...

From age 5 to 6 three things happened that impacted me greatly. Christmas>>meeting Avi Cohan and my neighbor Mr.Bordner who became my summer babysitter.

Christmas,which had meant at least some relief from the daily horror inflicted a level of guilt and shame that truely stunned me.I got nothing.There was a note in my christmas stocking from Santa that simply read I would not be getting anything as I was on his "Bad Boy" list that year!!! Now even Santa knew the truth,I was indeed a "bad boy" and believed it in every fibre of my being.This crushed me.Now I had to worry about my family,my father A-N-D fricken Santa Claus now!!!I really didnt need that!!

Because I had been sooooo bad all I was allowed for Christmas supper was a peanut butter sandwich and a glass of water while everyone else enjoyed turkey and all the trimmings. Late that night as I layed there on my mattress trying to stay warm my brother snuck into my bedroom and gave me this old little transister radio of his,hugged me and wished me merry christmas and quietly slipped out but made sure to tell me dad never found out he gave me the radio.I stayed up ALL night listening to that radio,listening to AM-radio stations from Chicago,Nashville,and even Canada,I listened to rock,country,oldies and doo-wop oldies.It made me feel special!I hid that radio in my closet,it allowed me to escape to far away places late at night after either escaping my drunk father or recovering from the latest assault on my body.

Coming back to school from christmas vacation was my vacation but the first thing we all had to do was say what we did and what gifts we had gotten.

PAGE FOURTEEN

His need---THAT DAMN WANTING--- had become such an obsession for him that I was not sure I could get him to defuse it.I was afraid it would consume him and get him in trouble.It A-L-L had to do with "WANT" with those things that were lacking and their lethal effect.

Finally Avi dug his nails into my arm and asked if I knew what he had done.I sure did.I knew what he was going to do before he even did.Thats what made me so damn angry at him!! I wanted to scold him and tell him "I told you so" and ask whether a stupid bomber jacket was worth it.He was NEVER going to forget this and that was punishment enough.I ripped the stupid bomber jacket off my back as if it were something contagious and ordered him to take off his sweatshirts.We exchanged clothes.his tears streaming as he took the stupid jacket.Gently he folded it,put it under his head and fell asleep.

Avi had sold his body for a "want". A lousy piece of leather he thought was going to make him feel better about himself.Kids got into drugs,gangs and premature sex because they wanted possessions,position and love.I knew that well. That man made Avi do things he couldnt imagine people doing.I could close my eyes and feel them.I remember every touch,every smell and how much my body would cringe when the terror of those things set in.

He would find out soon enough that the times when he felt at peace again would be few and far between.Avi and I never talked about that incident again.When other boys spoke about going into 7th & Franklin,a strange look crossed his face,as if somebody had just punched him in the stomach.He'd look away and take a deep breath and if our eyes met I'd smile at him and slightly shake my head as if to say---"Leave it alone".

Avi and I continued to ride the buses and talk about all we wanted.Someday we would be able to open a wallet and just pay for something because we wanted it.We longed for the day when it would not feel as though that list of "wants" was so damn long.We silently prayed to know...that finally it wouldnt feel as though that list of "wants" wasnt so damn long.In our world that was just too much to ask,but we tried.

We did what we could and we bit the bullet when we had to.We were no heroes nor were we experienced at handling situations that got the better of us.We were friends though and we knew that if there was nobody else the other was there to cushion the avalanche of emotions,We went on because there was simply no reason not to yet.

Somehow we knew that if there was a god he'd know that we wanted---that our hearts broke because of it--- that we were alive in spite of it.

The reign of terror ended abruptly shortly after I turned 10 years old.

Next PAGE

It was getting harder and harder to cover up the after effects.When I was not wincing from pain I was struggling to shake off my horrible feelings about myself.I told myself that these hardships were temporary,that soon I would be out and away from this nightmare.When I thought about it for more than a few seconds though I began to doubt it.

There is nothing as devastating as peer pressure,nothing can crush your self esteem as much as not being seen the way you desperatly want to be seen.Kids can be cruel and ruthless. Once a kid gets to the point where he understands what an outter image is,he becomes a slave to it and it consumes his inner image as well.For me it began when stupid bomber jackets became the "IN" thing to have.Most kids at school were getting them and Avi wanted one badly.His mom told him to forget it.My brother had an old one that he tossed to me when he got his new one,it was shabby and I didnt care for it but I wore it because it kept the cold away.I would have preferred a baseball jacket myself but choices were not exactly given to me in such matters.Kids at school actually began to make compliments about it because it had that whole "broke in worn" look AKA "cool" which was very foreign to me to suddenly be seen as "cool" in school.This is when Avi's obsession for a bomber jacket exploded.

He handed me a note during class telling me to meet him at "our place".When I met up with him I told him it better be worthwhile because I was missing gym which I loved.He began talking about how those old men would proposition us when we'd be hanging out at the Franklin Hotel and around 7th & Franklin Street in Reading late at night.I made faces as he spoke.He finally got to the point.Earning money to buy things we wanted.I laughed at him.I asked if he had any idea what the hell he was saying and if he realized what those men would want.After 3 years of Mr.Bordner and his son Jason and being their hooker I knew firsthand what they wanted.Avi just laughed and said "we'd" make them pay up front.WE NOTHING!! I shouted at him for even suggesting "we" take this hustling crap seriously. I left school that day not talking to Avi.We were not going to agree,that was obvious,and I didnt want to talk about it any more.

This was N-O-T the first time I had heard of boys going there to sell themselves for spending money.I couldnt though,I didnt want one more person putting their filthy hands on my body and I was deeply angry at Avi for even suggesting it.It was just after midnight when Avi showed up at my house...visably shaken.I grabbed my jacket and hurried out the door.A funny feeling came over me as we got on the BARTA bus.Avi turned to me as we sat and the dam broke,tidal waves of tears exploded out of his eyes.I put my arm around him and hugged him close.He said he'd gone into 7th & Franklin.Then he began just repeating "I never thought it would be like that".I repeated those same words in my head but I KNEW it would be like that.I dont know when it happened but I was crying with him.

I couldnt tell him it would be "okay" yet I wanted to badly.I knew it never would be again though.Once someone invades that part of you that is sacred and private,NOTHING much ever feels right again.I was scared,I didnt want to lose Avi into a blackhole.It seemed like the little corner of the world I had with him was caving in now.

While all the other kids excitingly talked about their gifts and sledding and all,I listened closely and when it became my turn I made up a grand story of a spectacular christmas.I could not tell the truth.

Spring arrived. Prior to afternoon recess one day the kids in my class told me how this boy in the class...Avi...was going to fight me. By the time recess had arrived a huge circle had formed around Avi and I and of course were busy edging us on to fight.Avi and I of course played the fool for everyone and just as we had begun to scrap things got broken up before they had really started.What I didnt know till later that day was those same kids in the class had been telling Avi that it was ME who was going to be fighting him.

From that day on Avi Cohan and I became close,practically inseperable friends.Somehow we instinctivly knew we were the outsiders without having to verbalize it,we simply knew.He was my first real friend but even with Avi I could not be completly honest about my situation at home even though he soon connected the obvious dots that other abused kids see in others like themselves.It was just that we instinctually just "KNEW" anyway and didnt need to talk about it.

Avi lived with his mom who didnt give a damn about him or what he did but she fed and clothed him and at least didnt beat him.He was neglected and ignored and I found I envied that!We instantly connected and just knew how bad our situations were and helped each other without feeling the need to discuss things.

Two things abused kids figure out is the power of "Wanting" and the ability to naturally "Know" about others like ourself.

We were inseperable,he'd bring me a couple sweatshirts to wear to school as my winter coat was basically a windbreaker.I'd never ask,instead he would smile and tell me to put them on and nod...because he knew.

Summer arrived.My mom went to work for the summer so I got stuck being sent nextdoor to Mr.Bordners house who had a 13 year son.That summer was very,shall we say,educational.Everyday I got breakfast which I devoured like a starved animal,I also discovered two TV shows.Sesame Street and I know this sounds idiotic because I know what people say about it but I discovered Mr.Rogers Neighborhood.

I memorized his silly songs and escaped into this fantasy world where children were valued and loved.I hated when it was over but I knew I would be back the next day which stupidly provided a sense of security.Pretty fucken sad! I also found out about sex.

Mr.Bordner always insisted I get a bath after breakfast which was great to me since I didnt exactly get them often at home.He'd fill the tub with hot water and put lots of dishwashing soap in to make a mountain of bubbles.The idea of a hot bubble bath was mindblowing to me...one of those deadly "wants".A "want" I'd already learned to desire! I'd get out of my clothes and jump in and he'd wash my hair and body,the thought of it not being normal or right was light years away.When the water got cold he would wrap me in this huge fluffy towel and dry me off head to toe,never saying a word about the bruises on me,bruises from my father. I'd sleep a few hours and get up,eat again and by then mom got home and I returned home and took off to the playground to meet Avi.

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About halfway through that summer,Mr.Bordner dried me off after my bath like usual. He asked me to bend overwhich I just did...learned submission. I didnt want to be "bad" and was terrified that if I didnt behave that Mr.Bordner could easily tell my father I had been "bad" and that would have meant severe trouble...so with no thought I bent over. That morning he raped me and would periodically rape me after my bath the rest of the summer. My strong desire of "want" coupled with fear of my father made this an acceptable thing to me. After all,I got fed as much as I wanted,had Mr.Rogers Neighborhood and more at Mr.Bordners so when you "want" bad enough you'll accept a L-O-T. Letting him do that was acceptable to me as the price for lots of food,sleep,TV,a bath.....and even though it hurt bad it still was better than the out of control beatings of my fathers,I didnt get knocked unconcious,I didnt end up locked in the closet.

Every now and then instead of a bath I had to take a shower with Mr.Bordners son Jason. I didnt know what it was but he'd masterbate in the shower. One morning he told me to put it in my mouth. All I said was "dont pee" and he told me what to do and to swallow it all and after our shower he gave me a couple bucks for doing it. Since I never got money I actually began to ask him if I could suck it to earn money. The money allowed me to get Avi and myself some ice cream, a soda and a soft pretzel at the playground later in the day.

When school began I was turning 7 and my father became dramatically worse,drunker and more violent. Avi would haul me into the school bathroom and help patch me up and give me aspirin to swallow.School became my escape again. Every morning Avi would have a pop tart for me and would share his lunch with me because I didnt get lunch money.

The inevitable "What did you do over the summer" thing would come up in class and Avi and I would both make up stories of vacations and fun we did when in fact we were busy learning survival. Late at night we'd meet up at the playground after sneaking out to listen to my radio and sing songs,our favorite was "The Wonderer". Thats when we met Zeke. Zeke was this old guy who was always sitting outside the Temple Hotel when Avi and I were out running around late at night. He smelled real bad and his one eye was all messed up. The owner of the hotel allowed him to stay there if he cleaned the parking lot and bar everynight. People treated him badly but he was cool with us, he'd tell us these great stories and give us a couple nits off his bottle of Mad Dog 20-20 wine which was pure fire in our young stomachs.

Zeke taught us life lessons about hard work and being yourself no matter what people said or thought of you, that we only had to answer to god and our stay on earth was short and to make the most of it. Yea,Zeke was one cool old dude. we learned motown music from him,we'd sing The Temptations and Smokey Robinson.

Sometimes after school I'd go by Mr Bordners and end up giving his son a blow job for a couple bucks so Avi and I had some money for our late night wonderings.

For my 7th birthday I had saved $8.00 dollars from Mr.Bordners son.

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Zeke nodded and lifted his sleeve to expose that mickey mouse watch I had given him.I smiled but was deeply saddened,he seemed like a rag of the man I had known.A half eaten soft pretzel that he was saving for later sat on a newspaper beside him,he offered it to me,a gesture that brought a huge lump into my throat.It made me so damn mad!!It was ALWAYS this way....those who had NOTHING would wholeheartedly give you anything while those who were overflowing with things ALWAYS made excuses.I handed Zeke the few bucks in my pocket.He thanked me and told me to look for him again when I was out riding the buses late at night.I told him to take care of himself and wanted to immediatly kick myself in the ass for sounding so damn condescending! We shook hands and I walked away.When I turned around to look back,Zeke was gone and I would NEVER see him again.I like to think Zeke was better off than I was.

In school we had begun having to do all those horrid composition assignments like "How I Spent my Summer","What I did at christmas",also on that horrid list got added "The person I admire the most" and "My plans for the future".It got so those tasks exhausted me.I didnt want to write compositions anymore because they were born of my wishful thinking.The reality was I had no summer vacations,christmas was phoney,I didnt admire anyone worth writing about and I wanted a future but the here and now was always so overwhelming.

I was so consumed in the present that I couldnt be bothered to enlist the energy to write about a future that seemed light years away.Maybe if someone encouraged me to write the truth it would have worked for me. So I lied...lied through my teeth and was being showered with praise for it.The year I entered Mr.Yellis's class he asked for a 250 word composition about a "Valuable relationship". I was ready to take a fat zero before I'd write another bullsnit essay full of lies.Sure,I could have had some imaginary awesome uncle or a wise former teacher to rave about but I didnt want to lie anymore.

So...I told the truth in an unexpected way.My stubborness earned me a "C" and merciless teasing from my class when Mr.Yellis read mine aloud and acted as if it was the most far fetched and moronic story he had ever heard.SO BE IT.It was the first honest piece I'd ever written.I wrote about Zeke.

All of it,including the Mad Dog 20-20 wine.My parents naturally were called to the school about it and after I got home I received a ferocious pounding for embarrassing my dad.

For years teachers have been reading to starry eyed kids about the wonders of fairy tales.The truth is..and it comes out fast..is that happily ever after is a punchline of a cruel joke! No one lived that way and it made me mad such ideas were planted in kids minds.It made me angrier that wonderful things and feelings were always make believe.I wanted no life that resembled a damn Disney musical!

I did have more crap going on than I could deal with.Things were getting out of control at home.I wasnt smart enough to be concerned about it because I'd learned to disconnect from myself.Avi knew though.My denial was hurting me as much as the incidents themself which were more frequent and violent.

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One night as we hung out,the hooker that played my "mom" when the cops were around showed us her breasts and lets us touch them.She told us about sex and what she did for a living.We were NOT shocked at all but instead began asking so many questions she finally told us to wait till we got older and walked off laughing. We cracked up!!

Avi and I would sometimes sit on the front stoop of the Franklin Hotel and try to out-do each other singing songs.He was the only person in the world who knew who I really was,apart from all the stories I told to convince everyone else that I was okay.We were hungry together,lonely and tired together and often afraid together.We never knew what the next day would bring and it scared us to wonder if it would get worse.Our saving grace was that we were able to tolerate things together.It was an unspoken pact between us that we would take care of each other.

We were crazy about Zeke.He didnt know...or give a royal rats ass...about school work,the honor roll or our troubles at home.Many were the nights when we would sit opposite of him on milkcrates outside the Temple Hotel having a terrific time.We didnt care if he smelled,walked with a bad limp and had those horn rimmed glasses thick as coke bottles.He stuttered and often paused in mid-sentance to re-group his thoughts.The only thing he did with newspapers was check the "Horrorscopes" as he called them.He taught us how to blow bubbles with gum and he always had a fresh piece of "Bazooka Joe" bubble gum in his pocket.He instructed us on the proper way to flip baseball cards and taught us checkers with a set he found in the trash.On Saturday nights,Zeke,me and Avi would sit around his beat up old radio listening to the doo-wop oldies show on WFIL radio out of Philadelphia.

I was forever snapping my fingers and singing "Runaround Sue".

When the goings-on at home were too much to contend with I could find Zeke sitting out.With him I had the luxery of just being a kid,I could do things that made no sense to anyone but me.One morning as Avi and I went to school we saw Zeke. Before I could tell him I had heard this "Four Seasons Hour" on the radio the night before he told us that he needed to say goodbye.His simple words said we'd probably never see him again and he was willing to take that in stride.

He said he'd always remember us.I gave him my one worldly possession...my mickey mouse wrist watch to make sure he didnt forget me.I wanted to tell him how much I'd miss him,that he was a great friend but I bolted from him so he wouldnt see the tears pouring down my cheeks.I was around 8½ then..it would be almost 3 years or so before I saw him again.It was at a DAPTA bus stop late at night.I heard someone say my name.I turned to see a pathetic figure huddled in the corner of the bus stop.I stood and apprehensivly asked if it was him who said my name.Stuttering he asked if I remembered him.I studied his features a moment and it hit me.The thick glasses were now all taped together and his right leg had been amputated at the knee,he was a frail old man.I whispered his name in shock and disbelief.

At home I pretty much got the hell knocked out of me, my brother slipped me some fresh batteries for my radio and a hug, my mom got wasted on vodka and finally another evening ended with dad somewhere..mom passed out in the living room with her damn Dinah Washington records playing. Just another night at home. I grew to loath Dinah Washington, she became a symbol of my misery and despair.

I took my money and ran out of the house to meet Avi and we went to hang out with Zeke. We got him to buy a small bottle of that Mad Dog 20-20 wine and Avi and I went to our hang-out up on the little railroad bridge behind the playground. We drank that awful bottle of fire wine, made jokes about turning into mad dogs, sang songs we knew as loud as we could and screamed our lungs out when the Conrail freight trains roared by across the bridge around 6 feet behind us where we sat on the edge.

I finally told Avi about my dad and he told me about his who had killed himself and we cried and hugged each other and swore NEVER to tell anyone our secrets and vowed to always be there for each other. I didnt tell him that I loved him yet what I understood about love from the brief times around my grandparents I knew that I felt that way about Avi.

As christmas approached the threats of Santa mounted along with the volatile nature of my father. I dont know how it happened yet one saturday morning my dad exploded in a volcanic blast directed at me that culminated with my being thrown down the steps in the air.I crashed head first into the small end table holding a huge glass lamp on the middle landing of the steps completly smashing both and bounced off the landing and rolled down the lower half of steps with pieces of the table and glass all rolling down with me,as though an explosion took place. I had blacked out near the bottom. When I came to I was in the backseat of my older sister Nancy's car. My mom called her apparently and she drove out from Reading to Temple and was halfway back before I came to. I spent the rest of the weekend at her apartment in Reading.

(I have two much older sisters from my mom's first marriage,my brother is three years older than me so by the time I was born they were almost graduating and had left home by the time I was 2 or 3)

Nancy fed me and patched up my cuts,I got a long hot bath and we went to the movies and after that I slept like a ton of bricks. Her apartment was toasty warm and comfortable.

In the morning she began to ask what was wrong,what happened but all I could do was cry and shake. We ended up finally going to Pizza Hut for dinner on the way back out to the house. It was then I again broke down crying and I told her about the note from Santa the year before and that I wished christmas was not coming up again because I had been "bad" again. That was the year I learned the truth about Santa.Nancy told me about it and seemed very upset when she did (She knew it had been my father) but relief washed over me. The house was deathly quiet when we got there. She gave me her phone number and told me she would come get me if I called. Nancy became my savior a few times.

Christmas vacation arrived. Avi's mom took off with her latest boyfriend leaving him alone for christmas.With the Santa curse lifted I felt better about it myself.

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GLOBAL ATTACK!!!
War Profiteering Is Killing Us All
ASPHALT JUNGLE
At last: Hear ye
MISSING
Cheat death.
"WE REGRET TO INFORM YOU"
Has bombed 21 countries
"...we will do what is necessary, we will spend what is necessary, say, to achieve this essential victory in the war on terror..."
– President Bush
LAST ISSUE
Since the second world war THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
APPROBLEM
IS NOT TOWARD